

SUMMARY OF WRITTEN PUBLIC INPUT

WAC 232-28-358 2012 - 2014 Elk General Seasons and Definitions and WAC 232-28-360 2012 Elk Special Permits .

Master Hunter Season Proposals

| COMMENTS | AGENCY RESPONSE |
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| I became a Master Hunter (MH) to cultivate relationships with landowners around the Turnbull Refuge. I have established good relationships and they provide me with access in exchange for the help I give them throughout the year. The landowners I work with don't feel that they have a problem with elk. I don't support the loss of the December Master Hunter season in GMU 130 and don't want to be placed on a list to hunt some property where I may not even know the landowner. | <p>It sounds like you have done a great job of addressing an important part of the Master Hunter (MH) Program which is to improve landowner relationships. Because of the number of comments received in opposition to the proposed change, the Department has modified our recommendation so that it continues the MH December hunt for antlerless elk in GMUs 127 & 130.</p> <p>However, there are also either sex elk seasons beginning in September and running into early December depending on the tag you possess (archery, muzzleloader, or modern). You are encouraged to continue your relationships with landowners and hunt during these time frames as well.</p> |
| I support the expanded opportunities for MH and increased involvement of the Master Hunter Advisory Group (MHAG). The benefit of all the volunteer hours outweighs the costs to the agency to manage volunteers. I have recently been appointed to the MHAG. | Welcome to the Advisory Group and thank you for your commitment. |
| What is the Department looking for with the MH program? If the incentive hunts are eliminated, many hunters will drop out of the program and the Department will lose out on their volunteer hours. Is the Department trying to phase out the MH program? | <p>The MH program is very important to the Department. What we have found however, is that some hunters were mainly motivated to join the program because of the hunts. We are looking to strengthen the program with hunters more motivated to giving back; retention of our hunting heritage; and improving landowner relations.</p> <p>Therefore the types of incentives used to motivate hunter's to be part of the MH program need to be re-aligned with that philosophy. It was never the intent to trade special hunting opportunities for volunteer work.</p> |

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| <p>I would just like to say giving all the quality elk hunting time around the Turnbull area to Master Hunters is not right or fair to the rest of us. I think some adjustments need to be made.</p> | <p>The main intent of the MH hunts is to address damage problems and landowner concerns. However, we recognize that the harvest of elk by MH around Turnbull includes many bull elk. There are either sex elk seasons for all hunters beginning in September and running into early December depending on the tag you possess (archery, muzzleloader, or modern). Therefore you are encouraged to develop relationships with landowners and hunt during these time frames. The proposed MH general season in this area would run from December 9 to 31.</p> |
| <p>I have been drawn for MH permits before and never received a call by a hunt coordinator to participate in a hunt. Is this how the ranked lists will work?</p> | <p>The ranked lists will be developed using the permit drawing system. We recognize that many were frustrated with some of the “on-call” hunts in the past and we eliminated those from our recommendation. In addition, we recently modified our recommendation to set what we feel are more realistic with our estimate of how many hunters might be needed to address damage problems within a geographic area. However, it is very important for MH to remember that there is no guarantee and we will only call on hunters once we receive a complaint from a landowner.</p> |
| <p>Can the Department let MH know their position on the ranked list? How do we know that the hunt coordinator is not just picking their friends to participate in the hunts?</p> | <p>We will look into developing a tool that allows us to provide that information. Hunt coordinators must follow written protocols for selecting hunters from the ranked (permit) list. These protocols were developed by the MHAG and will be posted on the Department’s MH website.</p> |
| <p>The Department has proposed an “unlimited” number of hunters selected for several hunts in the deer and elk MH categories. If very few of these hunters are called to participate, they will be unhappy with the proposed system.</p> | <p>We agree, part of the rationale for these “unlimited” pools was to ensure that most MH’s were drawn every year; thereby eliminating the need or use of points in the selection process (it would merely be random each year for all applicants). Many hunters will not understand or agree with the rationale and so we will change our recommendation to estimate the number of permits that we think will be needed or we have eliminated the hunt choice.</p> |

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| <p>Why do I lose my points when selected for a hunt but don't get called and don't get to hunt?</p> | <p>The point system was designed to improve the odds of being drawn for those who applied year after year, but weren't drawn for a permit. That is important for those hunts that are difficult to draw. That is not the case with MH permits (1975 MH certified; 800 elk applicants; 500 permits). If you apply for several permit choices, you will be drawn regularly. Therefore you will not be competing with folks who have a lot of points for very long. This is just a carryover from the change in application categories in 2010. Many have suggested eliminating the use of points for MH categories.</p> |
| <p>Why weren't MH more involved with the recommendations for changes to the MH hunts earlier in the process? Communication efforts were poorly executed.</p> | <p>The standard process for public involvement with our hunting season recommendations includes general public scoping, consultation with Advisory Groups, development of options, development of proposals, and then comment and testimony during the formal Commission regulation adoption process. We followed that process with our development of changes to the MH seasons as well. One significant difference is that by Commission policy the MH Advisory Group does not support or oppose agency recommendations for MH hunts. We did involve them in December to help us develop guidelines for hunts. We feel that our original proposals followed those guidelines, but recognize that this was a big change for some folks and needed to be more of a phased approach.</p> |
| <p>As a landowner and MH, I support keeping the MH December hunt in GMU 127 for antlerless; that is better than closing down the hunt. The ranked list concept is okay as long as it's fair and the same people don't get called all the time to hunt. Landowners who ask for damage complaint hunts and other relief should not receive it unless they open their land to hunters. They also should not be allowed to select the hunters for these damage hunts nor charge a fee.</p> | <p>We appreciate your perspective and your support for our modified proposal to keep GMUs 127 & 130 open for MH in December. The ranked lists will be developed using the permit drawing system. Hunt coordinators will all be using a standard set of procedures for who gets called to participate. We recognize that many were frustrated with some of the "on-call" hunts in the past and we eliminated those from our recommendation. In addition, we recently modified our recommendation to set what we are more realistic with our estimate of how many hunters might be needed to address damage problems within a geographic area. However, it is very important for MH to remember that there is no guarantee and we will only call on hunters once we receive a complaint from a landowner.</p> |

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| <p>The MH hunts requiring a hunt coordinator should be eliminated and those permits should be re-allocated to the three user groups (archers, muzzleloaders, modern firearms). The MH general season hunts should be eliminated because they are either-sex and are not depredation hunts.</p> | <p>The MH hunts requiring a coordinator are the best example of depredation hunts. The permit holder doesn't even get to hunt unless a landowner asks to have someone come out and remove an animal that is causing problems. The Department's recommendation has been changed to reflect antlerless only for the MH general season hunt in December in GMUs 127 & 130.</p> |
| <p>The decision to remove MH hunter incentive hunts is not the right one. If MH are merely skilled assassins, then you don't need 2000 volunteers to do that. A primary goal should be to increase awareness of ethical hunting behavior. This objective is also stated in WAC 232-12-073. The Department needs to promote this MH program to compel its members to be ambassadors, role models, and mentors. So providing incentive hunts to encourage enrollment in the program will increase hunter awareness and improve ethical behavior.</p> | <p>As mentioned above, we have modified our recommendation to provide an antlerless elk season in GMUs 127 & 130 for MH during the December time frame. While many might agree with your perspective about encouraging ethical behavior, our experience with the program does not indicate that the curriculum necessarily can change someone's core values or behavior. We are attempting to attract a core of hunters that already have high ethical values to model and mentor that standard to others. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to become a MH, but we feel that the primary motivation should be something besides a special hunting opportunity. We will continue to seek the right balance with hunting opportunities for MH.</p> |
| <p>We support the MH permits for Region 4, but recommend setting permit levels rather than unlimited ranked lists. We have been successfully using the MH program and hunt coordinators to manage the elk population around North Bend. We recommend that this system be expanded to other areas.</p> | <p>Thank you for your support. Our revised recommendation establishes permit levels and eliminates the unlimited pools.</p> |
| <p>The Department is phasing out the MH in the area around the Turnbull Refuge and allowing the Colombia Plateau Wildlife group to administer the hunting program. I have been working with landowners to repair fences, cut firewood, and help them hay. In return I get to hunt their property. If we lose the December MH hunt, I will lose out on the relationship that I built up.</p> | <p>It sounds like you are doing a good job promoting hunter/landowner relations. The Columbia Plateau Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP) program proposal for the area near Turnbull is not connected to the MH hunt proposal. The LHP program is designed to increase hunter access on private land and this proposal attempts to do that. We understand that many hunters in the Spokane area went through the MH program to be able to hunt the December hunt. So we modified our proposal to retain the December hunt for antlerless elk in GMUs 127 & 130.</p> |

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| I think you should allow MH to hunt elk on both sides of the state, especially for the 3911 and 3912 hunts. | We have done that quite a bit in the past and only recently began to limit it. We began to make the change because we have been spreading more MH permit hunts across the state so hunters had more opportunities closer to home. The restriction was also designed to address crowding issues in 3911 and other general season MH hunts. |
| We have been successfully managing the hunts in the Sequim area for many years; I don't think the pool of MH hunters will work as well. | We appreciate your help for all these years, but with the elk herd now much smaller, we think an on-call pool of MH will be able to address any damage issues. If this doesn't work out, we can adjust in the future. |
| Make sure the MH hunts allow hunters to participate from both sides of the state. I buy an eastern Washington elk tag, but can't get on any land in 3911. They keep it to locals only. | We recognize that landowners may feel more comfortable allowing hunter access to those they know (locals). However, our program generally allows anyone to apply or participate regardless of where they live. The concern is that for the permit hunts managed by hunt coordinators, the landowner wants hunters there when the elk are present, so hunters on these lists need to be available quickly. That may not work for everyone and we ask that folks make sure they can be available quickly if they commit to one of these permit hunts. |
| I support the Department's recommended change in GMUs 127 & 130 to antlerless only. | Thank you for your support. |
| I support the MH permit hunts that use a hunt coordinator; this has worked out well for several western Wash. Hunts. | Thank you for your support. |
| Thank you for asking MH to participate in the planning stage for the next couple year's hunts. I support using MH as a tool and not take opportunities away from general hunters. | You are welcome, thank you for commenting and for your support. |
| I am not sure I like the proposed changes for the Turnbull area, but currently it is a good ole boy hunt. Only those who know a landowner get to hunt. Maybe we need a limit on how many elk a MH can kill in these hunts year after year. I like the MH orientation that occurs for the 3911 hunt and recommend expanding that system. | We will give the current proposal a chance to see how it works in the Spokane area. The 3911 hunt is pretty unique and works well and many other MH hunts managed by hunt coordinators do require an orientation before a hunter can participate. |

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| <p>I have found that the best way to get permission to hunt on private land is to hide the fact that I am a Master Hunter. I have been denied access to land solely because I am a MH. The 3911 hunt is no longer worth paying the cost of a second tag, there just aren't enough elk in the area. WDFW should recognize that most folks who take the MH course are interested in extending the hunting opportunity not understanding the biology or conservation history. WDFW should increase the hunting opportunities, success, and quality of animals harvested. The emphasis of the MH program should shift to the ability to shoot, track, indentify, and hunt safely. You should also use the Wyoming system of paying a landowner if a hunter harvests an animal on his property.</p> | <p>We appreciate your comments, but our perspective on what we are looking for in the MH program is different than yours.</p> |
| <p>I would classify myself as a disillusioned Master Hunter. I completed the requirements and became a MH in 2009 in order to take advantage of additional hunting opportunities. This program has not opened up any additional lands or opportunities. You should just cancel the MH program.</p> | <p>We are attempting to attract a core of hunters that have high ethical hunting values to model and mentor that standard to others. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to become a MH, but we feel that the primary motivation should be something besides a special hunting opportunity. We will continue to seek the right balance with hunting opportunities for MH.</p> |
| <p>After reviewing the entirety of changes, I want to note that the program truly seems to be growing and developing in a positive direction.</p> | <p>Thanks for your support.</p> |
| <p>Please do not change the boundary of 3911 and also consider extending the general season through December 31.</p> | <p>The boundary of the 3911 hunt seems to change fairly regularly, however we are not proposing a change for 2012. We have been fairly successful with reducing the damage concerns in the Ellensburg area and would like to reduce the number of elk killed for damage reasons. The transition timing of the general season to a permit season is based on these objectives. The Department's current harvest and management objectives are to shift some of the antlerless elk harvest from damage mitigation to the recreational season.</p> |
| <p>I stopped hunting the MH seasons in the Cheney area due to low property access. When I did get access, I was given a specific area to hunt while the family and friends got the premo spot.</p> | <p>Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>I received a pumice plains permit last year and harvested a cow, but saw some trophy class bulls. Would it be possible to add a bull tag or two in Pumice Plains?</p> | <p>At this point, the USFS objectives are to reduce impacts to this natural area. Harvesting cows is the best way to reduce elk numbers and their impact on the habitat.</p> |

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| My partner and I have tried to get access in the area of GMUs 127 & 130. Some of the ranches are leased out, some save it for themselves, and some for family only. This hunt needs to go to a permit drawing only. | We are trying to develop a balance between landowners and those currently gaining access with others who would like a chance to hunt in this area. We have modified our recommendation to retain an antlerless general season hunt in December for GMUs 127 & 130 and MH permits that would be called on when a landowner has a problem they would like help with. |
| I definitely agree with the proposed changes “on-call” lists and plan to get on the Region 5 & 6 lists. I have had a good experience in the past, though I had to work pretty hard and be available for many days in order to be successful. | Thank you for your support. |
| I agree with the Toledo hunts except I think the December hunt has too many tags. This herd has been significantly reduced. The on-call system may be okay, but it needs to be implemented fairly. | We will continue to use a number of hunts to help us manage the population level of the Mt. St Helens elk herd and their impact on private property. The planned reduction of this herd is not completed yet. We do plan to use a set of procedures to ensure that the on-call permits are fair to everyone. |
| Proposing changes to the hunts available to MH on the deadline of the application process is wrong. Many applicants may have chosen to not enroll had they been aware of the changes. | The timing of the application period and the hunting season recommendations is just co-incidental. |
| Establish permit seasons and dates for MH permits gives the hunter more flexibility and allows for better planning of time off from work etc. than Regional pools. | We recognize that trying to balance the seasons and dates and potential for being called at any time are all considerations that hunters must deal with. Balancing the needs of landowners with damage problems and hunters is challenging. We try to provide a mix of options for both. |
| Why are you suggesting limiting the 3911 hunt to modern firearm only? | As a practical matter, the terrain is pretty open and most hunters use modern firearms in this area. |